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A Saga of Swisher County (Texas)

1890 -- 1958

By

Willie Poff Flynt

Presented to the Genealogy Collection

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A SAGA OF SWISHER COUNTY

1890--1958

By

LILLIE POFF FLYNT

Rec'd May 12-1977

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Mr. J. L. Cantrell

Mr. G. C. Hutchinson

Mrs. Maude Rush

Mr. James Hale

Old Files of Tulia Hearld

Texas Almanac

Court records

Illustrations
By Mrs. Earl Porter

The Author

Lillie Poff Flynt is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Poff. She was born in Swisher county, February 23, 1892. She received her schooling in Tulia. She was married out of high school to E. W. Flynt, a merchant in Tulia, but she has never ceased to study. Study is her hobby.

She has, by correspondence, received a diploma from "The Standard Training School." She has won a diploma in Bible Study. She also has five extra credits in Bible Study. She has taken a course in writing and has studied government. She has studied French and Spanish, and has had three years of Latin, and has taken a course in journalism.

She has always been active in the Methodist Church and is a member of the Womans' study Club.

A SAGA OF SWISHER COUNTY

Swisher County--the land of prophecy and promise--lies in the heart of the "Golden Spread", a term made famous by Cotton John, the radio and television announcer. It lies also in the heart of the great plains country. It typifies the fact that all great things in life are free, for there is an abundance of fresh air, water and sunshine. Fresh air that heals the invalidic person; sunshine that makes things thrive and grow; and water, that quenches the thirst of man, bird, beast and the land.

But let us go back to the earliest history of Swisher County that had its beginning as early as 1830. At that time the Comanches and Kiowas were wandering around over the broad prairies, killing the buffalo for its meat and its hide. Coming from the Northwest they moved down upon the myriads of buffalo to decimate the gigantic herds. It has been estimated that the great "Thundering Herds" at that time numbered over 75,000,000.

As the buffalo made their annual trek from Central Canada to the Southern coast there was not a single house or barbed wire fence to impede their progress.

Then the white men came in their conestagas, or covered wagons, seeking financial gain from the provender of the plains by slaying the buffalo. They ushered in a new era known as the hide hunting days. During which hide hunters, in 1872-1873 slaughtered what was estimated to have been 5,373, 730 buffalo, and from 1877-1878 there were slaughtered in the Panhandle alone over 6,000,000 buffalo.

Swisher county is just one of the many counties that figured in this great holocaust.

When our fore-fathers came to this part of the country it was by no chance or accident that they

Chose this particular county in which to settle. Neither was it made famous by fable or fiction, but it was made known by its founder, James Gibbon Swisher. The county was created in 1876 and organized in 1890. It was named for its founder Mr. Swisher, who was signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and who took active part in the storming of San Antonio during the war with Mexico in 1835.

Swisher county comprises nine hundred sections, an area that is thirty miles square. Within its confines there is a wealth of material blessings. Its grassy acres that stretch out in great undulating waves make it a cattleman paradise, while its soil is rich, fertile and productive.

The county was surveyed by Mr. W. B. Hutchinson, assisted by J. L. Cantrell and C. C. Poff. It was the dream of Mr. Hutchinson that there be an arterial line of roads connecting the four outlying corners of the county that would lead to Tulia, the focal point of all roads. Could he have looked forward to see our well paved farm to market roads that stretch out to the ends and borders of our county, he would have seen that his dreams had been realized.

On July 17, 1890, the leading citizens of Tulia

went to Plainview to inaugurate the county seat of Swisher county. At that time Wadsworth, a settlement southeast of Tulia, wanted to be the county seat. So the question was contested at Plainview and Tulia came out winner.

Tulia, the county seat of Swisher county, had its beginning as a line camp situated on Middle Tule Creek. The camp was a stopping place for the cowboys who rode the range for the famous Adair Ranch.

Tulia derived her name from the Tule Creek, of which there are three tributaries, one was known as South Tule, one as Middle Tule and the other North Tule. As previously stated, Tulia was situated on Middle Tule.

Tulia gradually developed from a line camp--that consisted of a dugout and a barbed wire enclosure for their horses into a thriving metropolis. The dugout acted like a magnet--drawing unto itself churches, schools and homes.

W. G. Connor, often spoken of as "The founder of Tulia", was one of the first inhabitants of Swisher county, having moved here in 1887. Mr. Connor's first home was a dugout situated near Middle Tule. (This branch of the Tule creek was fed by a spring, and that was the source of their water supply). Later

Mr. Connor built a two story house on the southern extremity of Maxwell Avenue. This house stood for many years a land mark of Tulia.

Lula Bause ARCH Harry L. G. Charley

Mr. and Mrs. Connor reared a family of five sons and one daughter. Harry, the fourth ~~son~~ child, was the first baby boy born in Swisher county. Their daughter, Miss Lula Connor taught school at Tulia a number of years.

Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Gray were other pioneers that came to Tulia in 1887. Mrs. Gray being the first white woman to settle here. They lived in a dugout southwest of town near Middle Tule Creek. They, too, withstood the testing of the times. While they did not live on the same place as previously located--still they remained in Tulia until their demise.

When Swisher County was first organized July 17, 1890 the first business transacted was the establishment of the town site. Mr. Connor supplied the section of land which was divided into lots, and each voter who was instrumental in naming Tulia as the county seat, was alloted forty lots apiece, lots being reserved for court lawn and city park.

The next thing the voters did was to elect the county officers, viz. , J. H. Settles, judge; Ford Faulkner, county clerk; Frank Scott, sheriff; Mr. Stegall was elected treasurer, and Mr. Bailey was

appointed the same year to fill out the unexpired term of Mr. Stegall. The first commissioners were Mr. W. G. Connor, Mr. Stapp, Fred Scott and J. L. Stallings.

Others who have served as sheriff of Swisher County were Messrs: Frank Brittan, G. C. Hutchinson, W. A. Porter, W. B. Crawford, Gilroy Porter, J. C. Moseley, whose unexpired term was filled by his wife, Tom Walters, John Caylor, Hugh White, and Darrell Smith.

The men who have served as county judges from 1890-1958 were:

Name of Judges	Years in Office	Years Served
J. H. Settle	1890 resigned	do not know
C. T. Word	filled out for Settle	First two from 1890-1892
W. C. Turner	1893-1894	2 years
J. F. Thacker	1895-1898	4 "
T. W. Tomlinson	1899-1904	6 "
W. C. Dinwiddie	1905-1906	2 "
W. B. Hale	1907-1910	4 "
W. F. Hendrix	1911-1914	4 "
W. S. Tomlinson	1915-1920	6 "
J. E. Swepston	1921-1922	2 "
W. A. Graham	1923-1932	10 "
B. C. McCasland	1933-1938	6 "

James T. Hale	1939-1946	8 "
H. A. Wallace	1947-May 1, 1951	4 yrs & 4 mos.
Claude T. Shelton	May 1, 1951 to Dec. 31, 1958	7 yrs. & 8 mos.
C. W. Rose	Will take office Jan. 1, 1959 for 4 year term.	

SCHOOLS

Schools have always been an important issue in Tulia. The early records clearly reflect the fact that our fore-fathers believed that education was the basis for progressive citizenship. The year before the country was organized they began to plan a system of education.

In 1889 the first school building was erected. it was a little one room house. The lumber for the building was hauled from Amarillo, W. G. Connor, C. C. Carter, and the Faulkner Brothers doing the hauling.

The first school building had a rostrum in the front end of the building and the room was equipped with a teacher's desk, long recitation benches, black-boards, and a water bucket from which all the pupils drank from the same dipper.

Later another room was added that gave the school building a T shape. Still later another building was erected. It was a two story frame building. The lower floor was used as a school room and the upper

room was used by the Masons. This building stood adjacent to the old school house.

The first term of school opened with eleven pupils, viz., Newt Gray, Mamie Gray, Bouse Connor, Jake Butts, Arch Connor, Lula Connor, Frank Faulkner, Mae Faulkner, Birdie Carter, Nelle Carter, and Edna Carter. The superintendents who served the Tulia school from 1889-1958 were: Lizzie Butts, Prof. McGeehee, T. W. Tomlinson, Brewer, W. P. Boyd, O.S. Ferguson, Parsons, Kuntz, Celsor, Mrs. Gertrude Laney, Beason, Adams, Cates, Sam Houston, C. L. Sone, Story Savage, Bagwell, W. H. Younger, I. H. Furney, and W. V. Swinburn.

In the year 1907 Tulia's first brick school building was erected. It was a three story structure having eight large rooms separated by a long hallway and the third floor was used as an auditorium. This building was torn down after being condemned in 1948.

Mr. W. B. Hutchinson was chairman of the board of trustees at the time the first brick building was built. C. C. Poff and J. L. Cantrell were the other board members.

In the year 1923 a more modern building was erected. As Tulia grew--the school system grew until the present day when we have many buildings

that stand as a monument to the school minded inhabitants.

In the year 1890 Mr. Jess Pearson settled in the Valley View community and in 1892 he taught school at pleasant community. The first year he had 42 pupils. But the next year the enrollment dropped to 26 due to the prevailing drought.

The years went by and the rural districts began to show their cultural advancement by establishing schools and churches at Happy, Kress, Love, Vigo Park, Union Hill, ~~Lank~~ Lake View, Houston and Elkins.

CHURCHES OF TULIA

While saloons were a customary evil in the typical western settlement-- the churches came in and the saloon went out.

When we look at the magnificient churches of Tulia today we see in our imagination a panaromic view of the people that have passed along Tulia's highway, who have left in their wake-churches that stand today as a living testimony to the loyalty, ardor and zeal of the pioneers.

The sturdy pioneer brought something to the plains more stable than just their material possessions that they crowded into their covered wagons ere they started forth on their long trek over the sun-

baked, windswept prairie. They brought with them that which was to enoble their lives to future generations and their posterity.

When we delve into the history of the past we are constrained to sing with the poet, "Faith of our Father's Living Still". For was it not evident that our fathers carried with them the flaming torch of Christianity? With small beginnings, the three leading churches of our community were organized in 1891.

The Baptist had an enrollment of five when they organized in 1891. They were Bro. Stamps, Mrs. Stamps, Mrs. Butts, Jake Butts and Lizzie Butts(according to Mrs. T. W. Tomlinson, church historian).

The Presbyterian church like-wise organized in 1891. There were thirteen charter members: viz. , Rev. J. Phillips, J. H. Hutchinson, Chester Hutchinson, B. A. Hutchinson, G. C. Hutchinson, W. F. Wright, J. F. Cox, S. J. Cox, Cora E. Phillips and F. A. Burkhalter. Rev. Phillips acted as moderator and Mr. Burkhalter acted as clerk (according to Kirk Hulsey).

In the year 1891 Rev. M. L. Morris with the aid of Rev. Jerome Harrelson, Presiding Elder, organized the First Methodist Church of Julia. There were

seventeen charter members, viz. , J. H. Stegall, M. L. Stegall, N. P. Browning, Missouri Faulkner, Ford Faulkner, Lula Faulkner, Mrs. Stacy, Paul Bently, N. A. Bently, B. A. Rush, Mrs. E. Rush, T. P. Rush, Lelia Rush, Sallie Rush, George Rush and Jerome Harrelson.

In the year 1906 A. K. Scott, a minister of the First Christian Church, held a meeting in the old Presbyterian Church and organized the First Christian Church of Tulia. There were 27 charter members. Efforts were made immediately after their organization to erect a building. In the meantime services were held in the Presbyterian Church on Sunday afternoons with Henry Hagemeyer of Plainview in charge. On the first Sunday in September 1907 their church was dedicated. Among the charter members were Messrs: E. G. Barks and family, W. W. Stephenson and family, James Frye and wife, F. R. Anderson and wife, Mrs. John Keim, Mrs. Foster Klous, and others.

The central Church of Christ began worshipping in the county court room in February 1907. Sixteen persons attended the first service.

When the churches first organized they met in the old one room school house, alternating the Sundays among different denominations.

A Union Sunday School was held in the afternoon. Among the early superintendents were W. B. Hutchinson, a Presbyterian, Ford Fau kner, a Methodist, and O. S. Ferguson, also a Methodist.

The Methodist Church pioneered in church building. In the year 1897 Tulia's first church was erected. Although it was a Methodist Church it was made possible by the hearty contributions of all denominations.

In the little methodist Church, the same as in the old school house, the Baptist, Presbyterians, and Methodists alternated the Sundays until the Baptist and Presbyterians Churches were built.

As the years went by other churches were organized in Tulia. Today there are eighteen different denominations. Taking alphabetically they are:

The assembly of God	62	Members	(1958)
Assemblea De Dois	25	"	"
		"	
The First Baptist Church	1295	"	"
The Mediterranean Baptist			
The Calvary Baptist	253	"	"
The Primitive Baptist	22	"	"
The First Christian Church	25	"	"
The Lutheran Church			
Church of Christ			
Central Church of Christ	425	"	"
Catholic Church			

The First Methodist Church	668	"	"
The Trinity Methodist	44	"	"
The Pentacostal Church			
The Presbyterian Church	267	"	"
The Seventh Day Adventist	40	"	"
Christian Scientist			

Some of the business firms that were located in Julia in the nineties were "Scott and Gass", who operated a grocery, drygoods and hardware store, and "Thacker Brothers". another mercantile business that served the people in the late nineties. "G. C. Hutchinson and Gass Mercantile" operated from 1898-1899. Later W. B. Hutchinson operated a business of his own. "J. L. Cantrell and Dunbar" bought out Garner and Price, former merchants, and they continued in business a number of years, and still later "Cantrell and Shows" became the leading drygoods and grocery store. They were in business from 1897-1938.

In 1907 W. W. Flynt opened up a confectionery, and for several years it continued to be run as "Flynt's Confectionery". Later, however, he added jewelry to his business. He also sold musical instruments and still later he opened up a line of drugs. He continued in business fifty-one years. He retired in 1958, naming his son, Wayne Flynt as his

successor. The firm continued to the present time under the name of "Flynt Jewelry and Drug".

In recalling names of people of yesteryear, we would not overlook that of Mr. C. S. Poff. To him belongs the distinction of living in Swisher County a longer period of time than any other citizen. He moved to Swisher County in 1890--establishing a home site on North Tule Creek. He lived there continuously for 67 years, until his demise in December 1957.

During that time he withstood, drouths, scourge by fire, sand-storms and the plague of grasshoppers and he emerged from all saying, "I have had more good breaks than I have had bad ones ".

While ranching was the primary occupation in Swisher County, agriculture soon made its advent. Seventy years ago it was estimated that the Panhandle and South Plains had a population around five or six hundred persons, the greater part of them consisting of cowboys. This was the day of the big cow outfits that counted their herds by the thousands. Probably there were 500,000 head--all native long horns. The cattle were trailed to market at Dodge City Kansas.

In the nineties small stockmen began the locating in the Panhandle. They gave their herds special attention, and before long the big cattle barons had passed

on. The county ceased to be open as barbed wire came into use. Better breeding stock was introduced and in the course of time the long horn had disappeared.

The early cattlemen grew no crops but depended on the native grasses to carry their herds throughout the year. Late in the nineties a little feed was grown for their horses. Not until about 1900 did settlers begin to make a living from the soil. Then with the introduction of the irrigation wells farming became a gigantic industry.

When Swisher County was in its infancy those who disired to supplement their finances did so by "picking up bones". With wagon and team they would transverse the country side and pick up bones of the buffalo whose carcasses were left by the hide hunters, to dry and bleach under the Texas sun. The bones were picked up and sold for eight dollars a ton.

Another lucrative job--that brought several dollars to those who desired to utilize their spare time, was that of digging loco. The loco weed is a poisonous weed with a greenish gray leaf and a shading of lavendar and purple flowers. It grew luxuriantly on the prairies and was detrimental to cattle and horses that ate the weed while foraging for sustenance.

So a number of ranchers undertook the gigantic

task of digging up loco, that covered many sections of the country. They would block off large squares of land and mark them with little tufts of sod placed one on top of the other to make the chopping more uniform and systematic. Those little "sod men", as the formation was called looked like little sentinels guarding the many acres of land. And thus the ranchers cleared many acres of the obnoxious weed.

Another industry that loomed large in early days was the wagon yard and livery stable. The wagon yard was a large plank enclosed lot, with corrals and feed for horses. It was the usual accompaniment to town life. No town was complete without its wagon yard and livery stable.

At the wagon yard the freighters stopped and spent the night batching with their own camp equipment, and obtaining feed for their teams. They also kept rigs and horses for hire.

Another unique industry was that of making spurs. Mr. J. O. Bass had such an industry. He personalized each spur, hammering out the rowels by hand. Sometimes he made them out of silver dollars.

Although he made spurs for many men throughout the United States, he also had special customers like Tom Mix whose spurs were made according to his own

specifications. He made spurs for a Texas General and for ranchers and cowboys.

His orders came from across the seas from far away England. He never sent out a spur that did not come up to his own standards. Each spur must be perfect. He was active in the spur business from 1906 to 1924.

We can recall the days of the old stagecoach whose motto was "The mails must go through". The stage in reality was a four seated hack, drawn by a double team of mules. It would make the run to Plainview from Canyon via of Tulia. The teams were changed at HAPPY Tulia and fresh teams were taken to complete the journey. [illegible] regularly that the people set their watches and clocks by it.

From the stagecoach era the community advanced to the era of the locomotivs.

In the year 1906 Tulia's first railroad was built. In serpentine array the new rails gleamed in the sun. A new era was approaching and an old era was going out. The iron horse was making itself felt in Tulia.

This little anecdote was told in connection with Tulia's first train: All Tulia had turned out to see the train's first appearance. The conductor seeing

that the whole community was present, wished to add a little humor to the occasion, so he yelled out, "look out we are going to turn around". So the crowd, most all of them, scurried back to a place of safety (I was one of the "wise" ones as I had previously riden on a train from Canyon to Whitesboro) but it was quite a joke on the inhabitants.

PASTIMES IN TULIA

Among the pastimes in Tulia during its early years, was the picnic. This was a gala occasion annually. There was always the "Merry-go-round", ("Flying Jenny") that was empowered by a number of burros, "the lemonade stand" and a long table for food. Sometimes they woul have a platform for square dances.

Early in the morning, on the 17th of July, people would begin wending their way to the picnic. Some a-foot, some on ~~horse-back~~ horse back, some in buggies, and some in covered wagons. The picnic was usually held at the ~~odl~~ old school house, although there were instances where it was held in the ~~odl~~ old courthouse. All wanted to be there in plenty of time to hear the political speeches, which were heard in the fore noon.

At 12 o'clock the women began unloading their chuck boxes, and placing victuals on the table, which were sheltered from the sun by wagon sheets (tarpaulins

we would call them today) stretched high over the table.

The old school house was also the place to have the community Christmas trees. Several days before Christmas the men folk would see that a huge tree was brought from the nearby canyons. And by Christmas eve it was standing on the rostrum of the old school house--all bedecked with tinsel, candles and ornaments. The gifts were not wrapped in colorful packages as they are today, but hanging on the tree in plain sight, would be toys, dolls, vanity sets, etc. People came from all over the country, and a person's popularity was recognized by the many times his name was called out.

One gift that hangs in the hall of memory was a crecent shapped pin cushion, wrought in elaborate embroidery, silk, lace and ribbon. My mother, Mrs. C. C. Poff was so fascinated by it--that she could hardly keep her eyes off it. To her surprise, when the name was called, it was hers. And it hung for many years in her home where it bore mute testimony to the true friendship of Mary Gass.

Once Mrs. Poff walked over to spend the day with one of her neighbors, a distance of one and one quarter miles. Her two sons were walking with her and she was pulling the baby in a little red wagon.

After spending the day they were returning home. Hearing the clatter of horses hooves, she looked back and saw a bunch of wild horses pursuing her. She began running toward a barbed wire fence, as fast as she could with the little ones. She kept glancing back to see the horses gaining on her. As she reached the fence, the horses halted just a few feet away. Thus a tragic death was averted by a barbed wire fence.

GOING TO MARKET

While going to market was not classed as a pastime, it broke the monotony of every day life. Today when the housewife, on going to the pantry and finding it bare, hops into her Ford, or Buick or Cadillac and whisks herself to the grocery store to get a loaf of bread or a bottle of extract. How different were the needs of the housewife supplied in the early days.

The housewife then, must be fore-sighted. She must anticipate her needs a year in advance. She must plan and make notes for the great day when they would to to market.

Her order, too, was vastly different from the orders sent in today. The early plains-woman's order was something like this: 200 pounds of sugar, 300 pounds of flour, 30 pounds of coffee, 2 crates dried

apples, 2 crates dried peaches, 300 pounds of bacon, 100 pounds pinto beans, 40 gallons syrup, a paper of needles, 20 yards calico, 20 yards denim, 3 dozen buttons, etc.(according to Mrs. T. A. Gray).

Making ready for the trip was indeed a thrill. Camp supplies must be assembled; bedding must be put in; water jugs filled; and all the needs for a five day trip must be looked after.

On the day of their departure they arise long before dawn. A hurried meal is prepared; the horses are fed; the teams are put to the wagon. Then as the sun peeps up over the eastern horizon they are off. The crack of the whip is heard. The wagon cringes and creaks as they wend their way over the prairie ~~in~~ To Amarillo or Clarendon, to return heavily laden with provisions that would last another year.

Another interesting diversion of Tulians would be a trip to the "McKenzie Battleground". In the early days the battleground was thought to have been due east of Tulia in the Palo Duro Canyons. There was a large flat rock on which, it was said, the Indians indulged in their war dances. Later it was learned from a party of Indians that came to Tulia and visited the old battleground, that the real battleground lay farther to the north; where the white men massacred all

the Indians' ponies.

Be that as it may, still Tulians used to go to the canyons to enjoy a day's outing. This meant they must prepare a picnic lunch. The mode of conveyance was by a "Johnny Barnes wagon", piled high with straw. Besides passengers on the wagon would be many lunch boxes.

The trip by team and wagon was an all day undertaking. We usually arrived by early noon. The first thing we usuald did was to make an inroad on the lunch boxes, and leisurely feast on their contents.

The afternoon was spent in climbing in the canyons, looking for beads and arrow heads which were left by the Indians in a past not too far distant. Then late in the afternoon we would wend our way homeward, tired but happy over the day's recreation.

SOME FIRSTS IN TULIA

Among some of the firsts in Tulia was a millinery store operated by Mrs. Taffity. She had huge bunches of roses, clusters of daisies, and sprays of morning-glories which were to trim your spring chapeau. You could glance in a mirror that hung high on the wall and see a grotesque likness of yourself and get an idea of what your new hat would look like.

The first loom in Tulia was operated by a Mrs.

Edmondson, daughter of Mr. Arsenaux. For a number of years she wove rag carpets for the community. Your social standing rated according to the newness of your rag carpet.

The first music teacher was Mrs. Pamela Boyd. Lillie Poff was her first pupil. Mrs. Boyd's husband was a superintendent of the school until he was taken in death.

The first doctor in Swisher county was the elder Dr. Eli Barnes, father of H. D. Barnes who succeeded his father as doctor. Dr. Stanifer also practiced medicine in the county during the nineties.

Tulia's first hotel was named the "White Hotel". It was owned by Mr. White and his two sisters operated it. Later it was run by J. A. Scott.

The first Post Office was located in a dugout. It was run by Marion Faulkner in the year 1890. Later Mr. Connor acted as postmaster. The post office at that time was located in Mr. Connor's dugout.

Tulia was called the town of windmills. Every backyard had its own windmill. Can you imagine a town with so many windmills? Yet that was what Tulia looked like before it put in city water. Then the windmills disappeared one by one until there is not a single windmill in town.

CATACLYSMS OF THE WEST

Foremost among the great Cataclysms of the plains was the great prairie fire in 1900.

The day dawned bright and calm, and clear. The prairie stretched out in great undulating areas of waving green, intersected by barbed wire fences, with nothing to break the monotony of the landscape except an occasional ranch house. Tumble weeds rolled by at intervals, swept on by gentle rising breezes.

The morning advanced. The air became hazy, the cattle restless. The horses halted in their grazing--pricked up their ears and looked toward the west. The wind increased in velocity. Along the western horizon was a low, dull gray outline. The atmosphere became laden with smoke. Then you could see the red flames, leaping, creeping, spreading--coming closer and closer.

It was a fire--a prairie fire. Instantly the inhabitants were galvanized into action. The men plowed fire guards. They drove their cattle into the centers of plowed fields. Some drenched their houses with water. All were mustering thier strength to pit against the dreadful demon--a prairie fire.

The women were hurrying to and fro. Some carried their household goods to centers of plowed fields. Others took refuge in water tanks. Pandemonium prevailed.

The fire came unrelentingly on. The wind increased. Blazing chips were hurled into the air--to fall in dry trufts of grass which sprung at once into leaping flames.

In the vanguard of the fire rabbits raced for their lives. The devouring flames came on and on. Houses were burned to the ground. Cattle were singed until their hides cracked and peeled. Some carcasses were left charred and blackened among the dead and dying animals.

Like demon against demon, men pitted their strength against that of the fire. With wet sacks tied to ropes, horses on whole, a leap ahead of the edge of the fire dragging the wet sacks in their wake, there-by smothering the angry flames. Men on foot fought with brooms, wet blankets or old coats. They must not quit. They must conquer.

The men became exhausted. Their faces were smudged with smoke. Their faces were very dirty. Their clothing reeked with the smell of fire. Their hands were blistered. But still they kept on.

Then as if the wind and flames had spent their fury, the wind ceased. The flames died down. The fire, meeting a ~~barried~~ barrier by way of a creek, or road, or by mans' effort became a thing of the past.

On the morrow what a contrast greeted their vision from the previous dawn. Once the prairies were covered with a rich, soft, warm carpet of grass on which contented cattle grazed and fed. Now the earth was black and charred. Piles of ashes marked the site of unprotected homes. In some places the prairie was dotted with seared carasses of cattle. The fire had taken its toll.

Grim lines marked the faces of the westerners. But they buckled their belts a little tighter; squeezed their purse strings a little harder; and lifted their chins a little higher and they stayed with the land.

Another thing that brought fear and consternation to the inhabitants of Swisher County was the Indian scare.

One day there came a message to the community of Tulia that the Comanches were on the war path and that they were heading for Tulia. The news spread around in true reverion manner that the "Comanches are coming".

The populace congregated near the old court house. They circled their wagons to form a bulwark. The women and children were placed inside the circle of wagons. They watched and waited but no sign of the

Indians appeared. Finally it became known that a drunken stage driver had formulated the idea as being a huge prank to play upon the people.

In speaking of cataclysms we would not forget the "black duster" that hit Tulia one Sunday afternoon in the year 1935.

A great billow of dust rolled up from the southwest--completely obliterating the sun. It was dark, very dark--so much so the lights had to be turned on. Some people thought the world was coming to an end.

While Tulia has had many "dusters" since then-none equal in intensity that of the first one.

Another plague of cataclysmic nature was the grasshopper plague in the early nineties. They came in great hordes. The sky was blackened by them. They ate every vestige of weed, grass, and the growing crops. They even ate the bark off the fence posts.

Mr. John Lemmons was heard to say "My Gawd, boys look up yonder". There were hordes and hordes of grasshoppers-but to the relief of the settlers, as they looked, the grasshoppers were leaving.

While droughts have always been prevalent in Swisher County--there was one that superceded all others. This was the drough in 1892. There was not a blade of grass; not a stalk of grain in the southwest. There was not a lake with water in it.

This condition tried the souls of men. The less stout hearted hitched up their tears and headed back home--leaving in their wake turfts of rabbit hair instead of tin cans that usually marked the camp-site of the incoming settlers. Jockingly it was said that a person could tell which way the traveler was going by the remains left at the camp-site--tin cans--they were coming in; rabbit hair--they were leaving.

Neither would we forget the great blizzard on February 12th in the year 1899. The thermometer dropped to 23 below zero.(Texas Almanac)

It was so cold that the men folk could not work outside more than an hour or two at a time. When they returned to their homes they would have miniature icicles hanging on their mustaches and eyebrows.

Their hands, which were encased in home-made mittens, would be half frozen--although the mittens were lined and interlined.

It was the cattlemen who suffered the greatest losses at this time. Their cattle would drift with the wind, as it bore down in all its fury--swirling sleet and snow in its wake. The cattle drifted south until their drift was halted by a fence. Then [illegible] would trample one another to death as they sought to escape the fury of the wind. One man was known to have cut the fences--to let the cattle drift. Thereby the cattle

escaped death by trampling.

KRESS

(Contributed by Mrs. Frank Armstrong)

The town of Kress, situated twelve miles from Tulia, is an outgrowth of the Wright community. The Post Office, formerly at Wright, was later moved to Kress, and with the Post Office as a nucleus, other businesses were added to it.

We recall the mercantile store operated by J. T. Bagley as being the first store in Kress. J. F. Moore ran a general merchandise store in the nineties.

The Methodist built the first church in Kress and all denominations worshipped there.

The first schoolhouse at Kress, was a small two story building, with four rooms, two downstairs and two upstairs with the stairs on the outside of the building, one at each end.

The "heating system" consisted of huge coal and wood stoves one in each room; and the teachers were the custodians of the building. Of course it was the duty of the older pupils to keep the coal and wood brought in for the fires.

The water was supplied by a windmill that seemed to have a habit of always being broken down, which necessitated hauling water from a nearby home. Those

pupils fortunate enough to live near enough, which could mean from one-half to a mile or farther from school, walked to school, many without being tardy or absent. Others rode horseback or drove in, in buggies or wagons.

Some of the early day superintendents were: Mr. D. Z. Hindshaw, B.A. Graham, Mr. Jenkin , Will Evans, S. W. Reeves, Mr. Wyllis, and Lee Howlin.

A very modern building was put up in 1914, of which the entire community and surrounding area were very proud. It had many rooms and even a "large" stage and many, many delightful programs were enjoyed there. The boys and girls played football and basketball on outdoor courts, in all sorts of weather. A small gym was added to the grounds were volleyball could a so be played in addition to basketball.

The beautiful new school system that Kress supports now is a far cry from the old buildings, but I daresay none of the pupils enjoy school as much now as some of the ones who went in earlier years.

Some of the teachers were: Miss Allene Skipworth, Miss Joe Skipworth, Miss Ruth Moore, Miss Hettie Moore, Miss Ruby Crawly, Mill Olene Valentine, Miss Clack, Miss Bertha Childress, Miss Winnie Hodges, and Miss Algie Hodges.

Kres today, has population of three hundred and fifty.(Texas Almanac). Although the inhabitants are small in number, they are welded together in strong appreciation of one another. Their zeal and ambition is of the highest standard. Their ideals of high culture are evident in their every day life, and their school system is of the highest quality.

HAPPY

(Contributed by Mrs. W. C. White
Mrs. S. C. Whitman
and Happy Herald)

Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, there was a group of cowboys passing through the country. They were out of water, and were very thirsty. They came to a draw with running water. At once they dismounted and knelt at the stream to slake their thirst. On raising from their knees one of the cowboys exclaimed "Oh Happy Draw", and from thence forward the community was known as happy.

Happy, located on the northern border of Swisher County, has developed into a thriving trade center and is justly proud of its rapid growth. It is the center of a rich agricultural territory where wheat, sorgum and other crops are grown profitably and successfully.

The large grain elevators located in Happy handle

hundreds of thousands of bushels of wheat annually, and is shipped to all parts of the world.

Mrs. M. M. Baggarly was the only woman in Happy for the first seven months after her arrival. She came to Happy in 1906. Mrs. Baggarly, now deceased, tells of her first night in Happy. She said," after traveling from Canyon over an uncharted trail by 'chartered' horse and buggy we were compelled to spend the night in a make-shift shed with a dirt floor. We slept on the ground since our house-hold goods hadn't yet arrived. During the night it rained constantly. The roof leaked badly. I slept with a dishpan setting on my stomach in order to keep dry. I had to empty the pan several times before the rain ceased."

In addition to her several other "firsts", Mrs. Baggarly also officiated at the birth of the first baby born in Happy. The baby was the son of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Logan, and was christened Armon Logan.

Mrs. Logan was Happy's third railroad agent. They lived in the baggage room of the Santa Fe Station where Armon was born. Dr. H. D. Barnes, father of Dr. Roy Barnes of Amarillo was to officiate at his birth, but the stork traveled faster than the doctor's horse and buggy. So, Armon was delivered with no professional skill other than that rendered by Mrs. Baggarly.

Mrs. Baggarly, mother of Julia's present editor, (H.M.) was book-keeper for the first store in Happy, which was operated by J. O. Bradenbaugh. It was a lumber-yard and dealt in coal and grain.

The first Post Office was the Hugh Curry Home. The stagecoach that ran from Canyon to Plainview carried the mail and changed teams at the Curry home.

Other early settlers were J. A. Edwards, C. O. Whitman and his two sons Seth and Vester. Another old timer was J. F. White who owned three sections of land at Happy.

T. J. Hall was a colorful character that lived at Happy Hollow in the early nineties. He was a bachelor. He lived in a one room house that contained a bachelor stove, sacks of feed for his horse, his saddles, some harnesses, a bed, a table and meager household supplies. There was a windmill nearby and freighters passing through would make his home a stopping place to rest and water their teams.

Mr. Hall was a very sociable type, often going on horseback to spend the night with friends in the out-lying community.

Dr. L. O. Peters was Happy's first doctor and Mr. Dillinger was the first druggist.

The town of Happy was incorporated August 14, 1911.

On August 19th of the same year the city commissioners were selected. The late P. J. Neff was the first Mayor and the commissioners were Tom Bandy and William F. Miller.

The railroad came to Happy in 1907. Proceedings for building the road were started in 1904, but were not brought to completion until 1906.

"Falty and Talmadge" negotiated the land deals for the town. George Stratton and Bob Wells were the first station agents.

Miss Sarah Rose, now Mrs. Beth Whitman, was Happy's first school teacher. The school opened in 1907 with an enrollment of thirteen pupils, of all ages. The first school building was built by citizens who gave money or labor. Today the school is a modern plant and it accomodates a large number of pupils.

The Methodist Church was the first church of Happy. It was moved into Happy from the country. For a number of years a Union Sunday School was held in the Methodist Church. Mrs. Emil Schafer is the only living charter member.

The Happy Baptist Church was the first Baptist Church built in the county. It, also, was moved into town from the country. Mrs. W. S. White was the Church's first organist and is the only living charter

ry her.

In Happy today you will find up-to-date business firms and the streets are well paved. It is a flourishing little town of six hundred and ninety inhabitants. (Texas Almanac)

1946397

The Vigo Park Community

Contributed by Mrs. Frank Cobb

"Go West Young Man" was still an inspiring quotation back around 1905 when the Texas and Indiana Land Company was organized by Mr. Ira Andrews in Terre Haute, Indiana with the purpose of providing a site on which to settle adventurous people from that thickly settled state. Settlers came from both Vigo and Park counties, hence, the name chosen for the site Vigo Park. Mr. Andrews brought trainloads of Prospectives to Tulia where they then traveled by buggy overland and picked out their locations. The small settlement consisted of a general store with living quarters above, a post office, a blacksmith shop, school and church. Houses were built by the partners Gardner & Stitt, after they had built their own, and usually in a style used in Indiana. Four or five of those houses still stand and are lived in, one of which is the home of John Welker, one half mile South of the store. Mr. Welker was the Texas representative

of the Indiana Land Company and many prospectors were put up and entertained there. He also met almost every new family arriving in Tulia, 25 miles away. He loaded their household goods into a wagon pulled by a team of big red mules and often pulled the family carriage behind, in which the family rode to their new home. He made occasional calls on them later also to see about their welfare which was much appreciated by people more or less homesick and lonely. Not all these families stayed, some succumbing to that longing for former surroundings, relatives and friends; though the most real reason was economic, due to the different and difficult way of life on these plains. A few who went "back home" were the Newtons, Bakers, Webbsters, Halls, McDowells, and Griffins. Tragedy also played its part in making it necessary for some to return to a more advantageous way of life. Such a family was that of Mr. and Mrs. Mollie May. They came from Indiana and settled near Red Hill, a delightful family of seven children, with parents that no word could describe but good. An infant left them bereaved in their first home and a young son was injured on a runaway horse, recovering only after months of severe suffering. Later a 15 year old daughter passed away and their oldest son was killed by a speeding car while

at school in Kansas City. In a few years the father also left them and Mrs. Hay had buried half her family in the Vigo Park Cemetery. She used great good sense in returning to Indiana where, with the help of her husband's sister, where she was able to become the city librarian and as a result educated her three sons and her daughter. Mrs. Hay left an indelible impression on her friends and neighbors by exhibiting nothing but strength, patience and faith through all her sorrow.

Some families who remained in Vigo Park where the Blocksome, the Augspurges, the John Welkers, the Jim Welkers, the Stitts, the Gardners, and the Huxfords and Davis(now in Tulia). Two men were widowed and obtained "mail order" wives. The Augspurgers drilled one of the first irrigation wells in Swisher County. Mr. Webster was one of the first managers of the general store, which also contained the post office. O. Huxford followed him and later became a Tulia merchant. A doctor also was brought out to Vigo Park. He was Dr. Jackson, and, of necessity, he had to farm as his practice was small. Patients who called to see him often had to wait hours for his return from plowing. He would be covered with dust but still wearing a white collar and tie as befit a doctor.

Others who came from Indiana but lived in Red Hill were the Spears, the Van Houtens, the Villers, and the Cranes. Times were hard for all and furniture and carpets began to look shabby. In the Crane family Mrs. Crane took up her profession, school teaching. Summers she taught at the Love School and in winters at Red Hill. Later she taught at Vigo Park, she and her daughters living in quarters over the store. Two teachers preceded her at Vigo Park, Bert Hall and a Mr. Henry. Mrs. Crane and her family loved the people in this Texas Panhandle and were determined to stay which she made possible by teaching. Mrs. Crane had come out on one of Mr. Andrew's tours and while he had first planned to locate in Kansas where other members of the family had settled and done well, he came on to Texas and liked so much the looks of the country and especially "the nice breeze blowing all the time", that he couldn't resist buying in the Red Hill community. Mrs. Crane, besides teaching, took an active part in community life organizing Sunday School, often serving as superintendent. She organized the First Home Demonstration Club in the community. She taught in many different rural schools.

Not all life was serious around Vigo Park in those days. These people were not acquainted with the

row standard amusements, radios and square dances of western tales in movies and on television. But the Parents provided many joyous occasions for both young and old. These consisted of Epworth League and socials, afternoon singings, fish fries and box suppers. Another source of social life as well as spiritual inspiration was revival meetings with resultant baptizings in the creek or in a large stock tank. On visits back in Indiana cousins would ask what there was to go to in Texas. When the answer was Sunday School and church there was much laughter. But there was a great appreciation of each other in all gatherings and everything was hilarious where people got together for fun.

Outstanding talents were not lacking in these gatherings. Ethel Blocksom could preach a good sermon if needed or write and deliver a poem at a moments notice. She was the life of every party as was Harvey Crane, who, thought he did not touch a drop of liquor was often thought "lit up". Ethel Blocksom was from Eureka Springs, Arkansas where her father was mayor. Susie Van Houten was a beautiful Kentucky belle with lovely silks and satins and an engaging manner and a musical background. She taught a Bible course at nights to adults who passed it on to their children. She came to Texas for her husband's health,

contracted his ailment and passed away leaving the whole neighborhood sad at losing her lovely spirit. Her husband became well and returned to his relatives to rear their three children.

Olive Walker was a fine hostess and choir singer. Kate B. May, spoken of before, was a quiet and gentle one and hers was a clean cheerful home with the smell of good food. Mrs. Augspurger too provided a model home and raised three lovely daughters. Later, she and her husband opened a good restaurant in Tulia. Then there was the miller family at Red Hill; a great family, mother, father, and ten children. Good food and cleanliness here too. They found it necessary to move to Tulia from the Putnam farm, and Mrs. Miller was telegrapher for the Santa Fe for years, while her husband was depot agent. As for the Putnams, they came from Indiana and established a restaurant in Tulia which ran on the merit of Mrs. Putnam's good cooking. They also owned land in Red Hill community. So closely did she concentrate on her business and so keenly did she feel the isolation from her early background that she made this apt remark, "Why, I wouldn't know George Washington was dead if I hadn't read it in the paper before I came to Texas."

Another delightful personality who brought

culture to the Vigo Park community was Miss Susie Frye of Tulia. She displayed great strength and courage driving horse and buggy from her home in Tulia, giving music lessons on the way to and from Vigo Park. This took her two days and she spent a night at the Augspurgers on route. She had come with her family, the James Fryes, from Kentucky where she had received her musical education. She is now Mrs. John Keim, a mother and grandmother; a beloved citizen of Tulia.

Most of these Vigo Park settlers adjusted well to conditions and people already settled here. Some few became known as cold and suspicious "northerners". What a grand relationship came to exist between those who did build up friendliness with the native Texans, though! There was much give and take between them. Colloquialisms, such as "you-all" from the Texans and "CHICK" from the Indianans resulted in great merriment and each using the expression themselves. And what joy it was to exchange a half gallon of blackberries for fresh milk, both equally needed by each family.

Practical know-how from the Indianans was warm friendliness and light gaiety from the Texans has made a delightful combination in forming the character of another generation in the Vigo Park Community.

To sum up the assets of Swisher County we would say that Swisher county is an outstanding county. With its natural resources it ranks second to none. Its schools and churches are a reminder that its inhabitants superced or equal any other county in the southwest as far as education is concerned.

Swisher county is situated strategically among other cities, making it a desirable trading center, for it is complemented with excellent stores, shops and places of business.

It has been said that if you wear out a pair of shoes in Tulia, that if you ever leave you will always return.

As we stand at the middle of the twentieth century in the year 1958 we gaze in retrospection at the frontiers our forefathers explored. Who knows but that there are greater frontiers to be explored as we turn our satellites toward the moon. New vistas may be bought into view. New lands may be discovered. And our youth of today may pioneer in a more daring manner than did the men of yesteryears.

SWISHER COUNTY

In Swisher County you will find
Land of every sort and kind.
Creeks, Prairies, Canyons, and hills-
Every need it fullfills.

It's soil is deep, fertile and rich.
Wealth is found in the irrigating ditch-
As from the earth the water flows
To thirsty crops row on rows.

In-vigorating air we breathe.
The sun shines among the trees
Casting their shadows for a shade
In every little nook and glade.

To live abundantly and well
Of no other land could I tell
Of so many blessings to have and hold
As in Swisher County-Land of Gold.

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